

MERCHANTS
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RESPONSIBILITIES

OF

AMERICAN MERCHANTS

FOR THE

CONVERSION OF THE WORLD TO CHRIST.

BY JOHN A. JAMESON, Esq.,

FREEP^oRT, ILL.

NEW YORK :

I. W. BRINCKERHOFF, 150 NASSAU-STREET.

1855.

This treatise, written at the instance of a merchant who has deeply felt the momentous import of the subject, received an award of \$100, from Messrs. R. T. Haines, George D. Phelps, and Prof. Howard Crosby, of New York city.

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TO
THE MERCHANTS
OF
THE UNITED STATES.

It is proposed, in the following pages, to set forth the duties which merchants owe to the cause of missions; to illustrate briefly the claims of the unevangelized world upon them; and to enforce the consequent obligation to meet and satisfy those claims.

The question, whether the hopes of the Christian church in regard to the ultimate evangelization of the world are ever to be fully realized, we do not pro-

pose to discuss. We shall assume that the prophecies and promises of God in his holy word make certain this result, and content ourselves with alluding to the four following indications that it is approaching.

1. Christianity is now only commencing her career of foreign conquest. So far as regards the world at large, she is in her youth, and for the first time since the age of the apostles is beginning to address herself exclusively to her great work of renovating the world.

2. The condition of the world itself, as a field for Christian effort, is now inviting beyond what it has ever been since the death of our Saviour. The heart and mind of the heathen nations seem to be stirring within them with great hopes, having reference plainly to the establishment among them of a new

order of things, wherein shall reign righteousness. With great truth may it be said, that "Ethiopia is stretching out her hands to God," and that the islands of the sea are either impatiently waiting, or, like Macedonia of old, earnestly calling for the gospel.

3. The relations of Christianity to the social and political world give promise of success in the great struggle between light and darkness. The nations of Europe and America most conspicuous for devotion to the Christian faith, are at the same time the dominant nations in political enlightenment and power.

4. The commerce of the world is in the hands of Christian nations.

Without farther preliminary suggestions, we proceed directly to consider the peculiar fitness of merchants, and particularly American and Christian

merchants, for the service of gospel pioneers in foreign lands, as well as for giving impulse and direction to missionary effort at home; and their consequent obligation to enter heartily into this great work.

I. In the first place, then, merchants, as such, are especially fitted for the work of evangelization by their extended and intimate *commercial relations* with the various heathen nations.

Did our space permit, or were it deemed necessary, it would be easy to give statistics of the immense commerce carried on by the merchant vessels of Europe and America with the various quarters of the world. Our object is a more limited and personal one. Suffice it to say, that from the ports of England, France, and the United States, are clearing daily many hundreds of

merchant vessels for trading-posts in various parts of the heathen world. There are also the national vessels of war, of which the officers and crews are very numerous, and in relation to which, in general, the same reasoning would apply. Those thus visiting foreign ports, as they arrive at their respective destinations, become the representatives of the Christian faith to the eye and the heart of heathenism. As such they are regarded by the votaries of idol-worship with whom they come in contact. The intelligent pagan, accustomed to the daily spectacle, among his own countrymen, of men living strictly up to the requirements of their religious system, at the risk of life and estate, judges in like manner of an unknown religion, by the fruit it bears in the lives of its professors. Of what immense importance

is it, then, that the officers and crews of such vessels should be men having the true spirit of Christianity; that, in their daily intercourse with idolaters, they should exhibit an honorable and virtuous regard for their feelings, their rights, and their spiritual welfare; that they should be men zealous to labor and to pray for the spread of the gospel; or, that, at least, they should be upright and moral men, unstained by the vices too prevalent among mariners of all nations, so as to throw *no obstacles* in the way of gospel missionaries.

How much evil the lack of common honesty and virtue among mariners has wrought to the cause of missions, may be seen in the Sandwich Islands, where it has been found less difficult to extirpate the idols out of the homes and hearts of the natives, and to educate

and christianize them, than to counteract the baleful influence of nominal Christians. These latter, flocking thither from all lands, for no higher purpose than the acquisition of gain, sow, even among the converts to Christianity, the seeds of intemperance and its kindred vices. How can this be otherwise, when men of the same blood and language as their religious teachers, and, to the eye of the heathen, bearing equally the stamp and seal of Christianity, show by their daily conduct that to be a Christian and at the same time a cheat or a debauchee, are by no means incompatible? A few ungodly sailors from Christian ports, by their vicious example, may in a great degree neutralize the efforts of a missionary station. This is because men will always test the truth and value of a new relig-

ious system by the effects it produces on the life and character of its representatives.

The heathen world, then, has a right to demand of the merchants of Christian lands, that these their representatives shall be men whose example will not be destructive of respect for the religion with which they are nominally connected. Our merchant vessels constitute so many shuttles, plying incessantly between the dominions of Christian light and heathen darkness, and, by their subtle threads, weaving together the material interests of regions most remote and dissimilar: should they not also, Christian merchants, serve as conductors of the heavenly light abounding *among you*, but there, alas, rarely or never seen, or seen only half obscured by the influence of evil example?

We are aware that a practical difficulty may be here suggested—the difficulty of procuring for the merchant service sailors and officers of the character required. In reply to this objection we have two suggestions to make, which we believe will show it to be groundless.

1. The general principle of political economy, that “a demand will beget a supply,” is no less true of men than of products of a particular description and quality. Has the Christian merchant made the effort to procure crews for his vessels who would exert a good moral and religious influence? We fear there are few who can answer this question in the affirmative. How then can the objection be honestly urged, until not only that effort has been perseveringly made, but until increased

remuneration has been offered, and the offer been declined by men of such a stamp?

2. Our second suggestion is founded on the too general persuasion that sailors are and must be abandoned men; that if not such at first, their occupation gradually drags them down to that condition. From this opinion we entirely dissent. It is unfounded in principle, and untrue in fact. It would be nearer the truth to affirm, that the tendency of employment upon the high seas is to render the hearts and minds of sailors more than usually open to religious impressions. There is, therefore, no necessity, arising either from the paucity of Christian seamen, or from the nature and tendency of the mariner's vocation, for longer freighting our vessels with vice instead of virtue, with practical

heathenism instead of vital Christianity.

II. Merchants are peculiarly fitted for aiding in the spread of the gospel, and the claims upon them are proportionably weighty, because as a class they are preëminent for *enterprise and practical business talents*; and because they control the bulk of the floating capital of the world.

We have hitherto spoken of the officers and crews of our merchant and national vessels; but it is not they alone who represent Christianity abroad. Merchants engaged in extensive commercial operations in foreign lands, are often themselves brought into personal relations with the heathen races; or if not, they have their representatives among them, in the form of supercargoes and commercial agents—men of ability, and

for the time invested with the power of their principals for good or for evil. The talents and capital of such men, if properly directed, become the seed and spring of great moral changes in the districts where their business is transacted. Of the dependence of great reformatory movements on the aid of business men and capital, we shall have occasion again to speak. It is enough now to say, that the mere presence in a community of men of practical ability and activity—qualities always the most striking and attractive of popular favor—provided those qualities coëxist with respect for religion and virtue, will exert a happy influence upon the moral condition of that community, even if such men do not actively coöperate with the laborers in the field of reform. How much more will that influence be felt

when those qualities, so potent in the harvest of wealth, are directed to, and especially when a generous portion of the income realized by them is employed in the nobler harvest of men, ripe for receiving the gospel into their hearts. And better than all, if these men be worthy followers of Christ, men not only whose moral example is salutary, but whose labors and prayers are unwearied for the conversion of souls, who can measure the extent of their beneficent influence, or despair of the speedy christianization of the world?

If an example be required of the influence of commercial men and capital on the moral condition of a heathen race, study the terrible picture, presented by Edmund Burke, of India under its early English governors, Clive and Hastings; or, for a brighter picture, conceive what

the state of society and morals in India would have been, had the ruling classes been men doing justly and walking humbly before God; had they meted out to the subject race, not, as Burke says, "*substantial* violence and *formal* justice," but English law and Protestant Christianity.

Again, we ask you, merchants of Christian lands, if, with the Christian name, the possession of eminent capacity and great capital does not involve a rightful claim upon you, that those endowments shall be so directed in foreign parts as to forward the work of evangelization; or that at least they shall be so employed as not to retard the achievement of that work?

III. But we propose to show, that to these grounds of rightful claim upon merchants in general, are to be added

others pressing with peculiar force upon *the merchants of the United States*.

1. Our country is largely indebted for its free institutions, and for its great material prosperity, to a spirit among our fathers closely akin to the spirit of missions. To labor in this cause is therefore but to pay in kind a debt which this class, in common with our whole nation, owe to God and to humanity. It is not too much to say, that of the several states which achieved our revolution, and particularly the New England states, all are the offspring of missionary effort. What was it, let us ask, that brought the pilgrim fathers to New England, the first planters to Virginia, the Huguenots to South Carolina, the settlers under Oglethorpe to Georgia, but the unselfish wish, first and chiefly, to plant the seed of the church in a new

land, not alone for the conservation of a pure Christianity, but for the redemption also of the heathen races inhabiting its forests; and secondly, under the protecting shadow of the church, to lay deep and broad the foundations of states, in which political liberty should spring up and ripen under the ægis of the law? From these simple men, inspired by this grand missionary idea, and chiefly in virtue of it, has sprung a nation such as the world never saw; whose achievements in the sphere of material progress, are exceeded only by its still grander triumphs in the sphere of intellectual and moral cultivation. Can it be that God has so signally blessed this gigantic missionary enterprise, and that you, merchants of the United States, who inherit much of its fruits, and share largely in the glory of its accomplishment, have

no duty to perform to help consummate throughout the world this great work, initiated by your fathers? Can it be that God will hold you guiltless, if you remain idle now, when Christianity is mustering her forces for the great, and, we may hope, the final conflict with error?

2. The social position of merchants in the United States is such as to give them greater influence, and hence the class attracts to its ranks more of the best talent in the land, than in commercial countries generally; their obligation, therefore, in respect to missionary effort, is in the same proportion greater. No class of men among us is in general more honored, or worthy of honor, than merchants. In our small towns and villages they are commonly among the most intelligent and respectable

members of society; they take the lead in business and politics, are elected to offices of trust, and are listened to as oracles of opinion. This position of respect and honor induces a vast number of our most promising young men to begin life as merchants. From the country they are recruited to the city, where they enter into the wider field of commerce, with every prospect before them of attaining wealth, or, if they choose, political honors. The poor boy often steps from the counter to the merchant's desk, and from the merchant's desk to the senatorial chair. We say then, that for these reasons, the merchants of the United States monopolize much of our best talent. If this be true, have we not a right to look to them for high views of duty and noble efforts in the cause of God, on the familiar and right-

eous principle, that of them to whom much has been given, whether of wealth or influence, much will be required?

3. The fact that Americans and American institutions are abroad regarded with especial favor, enhances the duty of our merchants brought in contact with heathen nations, to labor for the establishment of Christianity among them. The practical effect of national predilections and antipathies is too well known to need much comment. The greatest events in the political and moral world are often traceable to individual or popular caprice. An irrational public sentiment, for instance, in England and France, has for ages united in pronouncing those nations to be *natural enemies*; the consequence has been, that, since the time of William the Conqueror, they have repeatedly deluged the con-

continent with blood, and even when at peace, have been scarcely less hostile to each other than when at war. Two of the mightiest empires of Europe owe their early christianization to a caprice of their respective sovereigns, adopted and imitated by the ready loyalty of their subjects, in consequence of which in both cases a nation was literally "born in a day."* Especially does this principle hold with the more unenlight-

* Clovis, the founder of the French monarchy, was converted, A. D. 496, under the influence partly, it is said, of policy, and partly of the example of his Christian queen Clotilda. The Franks, his subjects, hastened to imitate his example, showing themselves, as Gibbon says, "alike prepared to follow their heroic leader to the field of battle or to the baptismal font." Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. 3, pp. 574-5.

The conversion of Vladimir the Great of Russia, who began to reign A. D. 988, and of his Russian subjects, after the marriage of the former with the sister of the Greek emperor, was brought about as rapidly and by similar means. See Goodrich's *Universal History*, vol. 2, p. 1041.

ened portions of the world. It is hardly possible, therefore, to overestimate the influence of the United States, in countries where they are regarded with unusual partiality and favor. We have only to allude to the opening of Japan—an achievement which will excite admiration more and more, as the difficulties which hedged it about are better understood, difficulties that had baffled the diplomacy of Europe for ages—to illustrate clearly this familiar principle, and to show forcibly the dominant influence wielded by us over both the heads and the hearts of distant nations. Our political constitution also, known and admired wherever there are hearts sighing under oppression, enhances greatly the predisposition among the people of foreign nations to regard us and ours with especial favor.

We repeat, therefore, that it is hardly possible to place a limit to the influence our country may exert, if we have but the will to make that influence felt. Rather we should say, that influence *will and must be felt*, for good or for evil. And it is the merchants of the United States who are chiefly to determine what the character of that influence shall be. They are to give a practical direction to it, for they almost alone come into intimate relations with the acting and thinking portion of the foreign population. Is not Christianity, then, entitled to call upon this class of men for the heartiest devotion to her cause, when God has so disposed events that, whether they will or not, they must ever be influential missionaries to the heathen—influential for evil, if not for good?

IV. But the duty of our merchants with respect to this cause is not confined to their influence in foreign lands. Possessed, as we have seen, of a large proportion of our floating capital, it is clearly their duty to make *liberal and regular contributions* for the support and extension of missions and other kindred enterprises. This is a duty which we wish especially to enforce, and the more, because we fear it has never been fully appreciated. There is reason to assert, that the mercantile capital of the United States has not been duly consecrated to the work of the Lord; that merchants have never, as a class, recognized it as their duty to pay tithes of their gain to Him, in whose hands are the winds that float their commerce, and who, greatly for their enriching, causes the sun to rise and the rain to

descend. With many noble exceptions, we fear that the hands of our merchants are not so open to give, in proportion to their ability, for the world's evangelization, as are those of some other men, whose means are less, but whose relations to the church are such as to lead them more fully to consider this matter. It is too often the case, that our wealthy merchants, who give at all for benevolent purposes, fail properly to support the cause of religion by seasonable donations; some of them perhaps intending at the end of their mercantile career to make princely bequests. We would not discourage such bequests; but submit to the candid consideration of our business men, whether they ought not, in mercantile language, "to honor the drafts" of the Lord upon them "*at sight*," looking for his promised blessing upon giv-

ing according as we receive, and at the same time guarding themselves against the prevalent and deceptive sin of covetousness.

For the success of the missionary cause, it is needful that there be *system and regularity* in giving. No merchant needs be told how unsafe it is to launch out into extensive operations, without a reasonable certainty of having funds to meet all emergencies. So it is here. The societies for the extension of missions are governed, in this respect, by precisely the same principles as are our mercantile corporations. It is clearly the duty, then, of that class of men who can best appreciate the necessities of such a position, and who are in general best able to relieve those necessities, to be foremost in so doing. Let our merchants urge the churches within the

sphere of their immediate influence, to aid in relieving them. This we regard as especially important. The American churches contain vast numbers of our mercantile men. It is in the power of these men greatly to influence their benevolent action; to organize it; to give it impulse by their personal activity; to secure to it regularity; to increase its extent, and to elevate the motives to it. It is due to their position in society, that this power, so wide-reaching, and in its possible results so beneficent, should be conscientiously exerted; that our merchants should take upon themselves the office to which they are entitled, of guardians of the churches in temporal concerns; that where action is needed, they should urge to action, and where the demand is for a liberal contribution to give fresh vigor to a drooping cause,

that they should make it a matter of personal duty to give generously, seasonably, and regularly themselves, and to induce others to do the same.

As our merchants are frequently the most accomplished and energetic, and often the only business men in our churches, there are many matters of detail relating to the collection and prompt dispatch of contributions, to the distribution of missionary tracts and periodicals, etc., which are liable to be either poorly executed, or entirely neglected, unless they take the lead therein. And especially is this true in our smaller towns and villages. The stores of our country merchants are little centres of circulation, to which the citizens flock for the sale of their produce and the purchase of supplies; where they expect not only to hear the news, and to re-

wise their opinions on politics and the social questions of the day, but to receive intelligence and practical direction in reference to all benevolent movements. These expectations of the community in which he lives, it is the duty of the merchant promptly and cheerfully to meet. His skill and capital are in the nature of a trust, to this end, from God himself; and to God must he answer, if he be unfaithful to that trust.

Again, the business habits of merchants qualify them, beyond other men, for imparting the necessary vigor and steadiness to the various organizations for missionary purposes throughout our land. Men in general have, and ought to have, great confidence in the opinions of merchants upon all business plans. Missionary societies are business socie

ties, and as such ought to be, to some extent, under the management and control of business men. The countless details growing out of missionary operations cannot be safely managed by unskilful hands. For the collection and disbursement of funds, for the regulation of exchange on foreign countries, for the extensive purchases needed in the outfit, the support abroad, and the return of missionaries, precisely the skill of an able merchant is indispensably necessary. In this respect, these resemble the more gigantic operations of war, in which the success of a campaign often depends as much on the administration of the exchequer, or on the humble offices of the quarter-master, as on the skilful strategy of the general. So it is in all great moral and social revolutions; they are bottomed on financial opera-

tions. These constitute the skeleton, absolutely necessary to give strength and stability to the body whereby the Spirit works. Our missionary societies, under the leadership of eminent divines alone, would doubtless effect much good, as they have already effected much. Men of great ability are many-sided men, and readily adapt themselves to any required position. But consider how much greater would be the efficiency of those societies, were the details of their business conducted by men of business, entering thereupon with the zeal that characterizes them when engaged in their own affairs. For this reason, we wish to urge upon the merchants of the United States the duty they owe to God and to humanity, to connect themselves earnestly and without delay, with the various societies for

the spread of the gospel. It is certainly the right of the church and of the world to demand this, and in view of the many providences of God relating to them, He seems to be repeating to each in unmistakable language, the injunction, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."

Thus much in relation to the duties and responsibilities of merchants in general throughout the United States.

To such of this class, however, as are professed followers of Christ, additional considerations of great weight may be presented, growing out of their Christian profession and character. These men have taken upon themselves a most solemn vow of consecration to the service of God. In language whose import cannot be misunderstood, they have professed their readiness to deny

themselves, even to the surrender of life, for the furtherance of their Master's cause. If, then, the merely nominal Christian, living "without God in the world," is invested, among the heathen who know not God, with the character and responsibilities of an ambassador of Christ, what shall we say of him who, by his voluntary act, has separated himself from the world, with the declared purpose of devoting himself to the service of God? Has he no special duty to perform, when the very crisis approaches for which his consecration was made? We ask not, if there is not much for him to *do*; has he not also much to *suffer*, if need be, for the triumph of the cause, whose champion he has proclaimed himself to be? The pagan devotee, obeying the imagined behests of some deity, will cheerfully

submit to bodily torture, or to death, to win the approval of his perverted conscience, or of the god which his own hands have made. Has Christianity alone no martyrs? Has she, of all the religions, no disciples whose zeal will lead them to sacrifice wealth and ease for a cause to which they have devoted themselves thus solemnly? And is this true in an age when there is no earthly interest so unimportant, but that it chronicles the names of many who have died to secure or extend it? Martyrs and disciples of such devotion Christianity indeed has: as witness the zealous labors and self-denials of her missionaries, and of the gospel ministry. But are there none to help when God calls, but His servants consecrated by the laying on of hands?

Not thus, Christian merchant, is the

conversion of the world to be accomplished. For the consummation of this work, God requires not only the labors and contributions of the nominally Christian world, all centering upon this object; but with still greater emphasis, He demands the labors, the contributions, and the life-long sacrifices of all who bear His name and seal in the church. He demands the exhibition of the same spirit which led the apostles, and after them the Protestant reformers, to rejoice in persecution, and to welcome death, if their blood might hasten the triumphs of their faith. These claims He founds upon the covenant between Him and them, whereby they have sworn to live for His glory and the extension of His kingdom. The heathen world adopts and urges these claims. It demands that the Christian professor shall

show the superiority of his faith by devotion at least equal to that of the votaries of idol-worship; that the depositaries of the gospel shall not go, the one to his farm and the other to his merchandise, leaving the world in the meantime to perish, but that they shall speed the heavenly message on its way, until, under its influence, all nations shall be converted to God.

Upon the special means to be adopted by the Christian merchant to aid the work of missions, we do not propose to dwell; but there is one weapon so essential and so potent, that a few words must be devoted to it in this connection. We allude to *prayer*. For the achievement of the great conquest, God will be inquired of by the collective body of His children. He demands to this end that their prayers shall ascend unceasingly

for the outpouring of His Holy Spirit upon the heathen world. It is solely through the influence of this Spirit that God works in converting the soul; and we repeat it, although God requires the physical energies, the wealth, and the lives of his children, as instrumentalities in forwarding His work of regenerating the world, yet His plan is to effect this work through the agency of His Holy Spirit, in answer to the prayers of His church. Is it possible then, Christian merchant, to overstate the claims which the heathen world, passionately calling for light, has upon you, thus doubly bound to respond, both as a merchant and as a Christian? To you, if possible more than to other men, is directed the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Upon you also, if unfaithful,

will rest with overwhelming weight the curse of that wicked servant who hid his Lord's money: "Take from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath ten pounds. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him."

We have thus presented as fully as our space would permit, a few of the grounds of the claims of the unevangelized world upon the mercantile classes. We have shown that they stand as the representatives of Christianity abroad, and that accordingly as they there deport themselves, our religion is honored or dishonored, and the labors of its missionaries facilitated or retarded. We have shown that they wield the most potent of social weapons, business skill,

and capital; that the merchants of our own country are invested with still greater power abroad, by reason of the favor that awaits every thing American, and at home, by reason of their eminent social position; and that their connection, in numerous cases, with the churches throughout our land, while it increases their duties and responsibilities, increases also their power, by faithful prayer and labors, to hasten on the time when the world shall be converted to God.

Merchants of the United States, shall these claims be disregarded?

Even on the supposition that you were to be influenced only by secular considerations, there is reason why you should put your shoulders firmly to this work. It is directly for your *worldly interest* that the cause of missions should

go forward; that the world should be subdued by the spirit of the gospel. As Christianity spreads more and more widely, civilization keeps pace with it, and in the train of civilization march commerce and the arts. Every missionary station established amidst the darkness of paganism, becomes a centre not only of light, but of beneficent social changes. Where Christianity enters, indolence gives place to activity; enervating habits are thrown off; men seek the improvements, and enlist in the trades and professions, peculiar to more cultivated lands. All these changes, and such as these, enlarge the sphere of the merchant, whether he be engaged in foreign commerce or the narrower circle of domestic trade. Prices rise, the demand for new products increases, and with the number of his customers in-

creases his wealth and influence. In this view of the subject, it is but a statement of the naked truth to say, that the consummation of the great work for which the church is praying and all good men are laboring, the conversion of the world to Christ, is but another name for the final triumph of commerce and the arts.

But there is a higher argument than this, and to comprehend it in its full force, allow the world for a moment to recede from you, that you may no longer be deafened by the clash of its business or blinded by the glare of its petty interests. Look steadily at the complexion of its past history. First in order, came the ruder conflicts of man with nature and with the savage instincts of his fellow-man; then, empires warring against empires, the march and countermarch

of armies, personal ambition, represented by the Cæsars and Tamerlanes, fighting against the rights of man; next, near to our day, the beneficent dawn of science, the application of material forces to the amelioration of human ills, the printing-press, the steam-engine. In the successive acts of this grand drama, are there not discernible tokens of a heaven-appointed task for each great historical period—of a special mission for each in the scheme of Providence, the actual working out of which, blindly or otherwise, makes up its history? Then look at the age which is just now dawning. Observe the general stirring of our whole race in relation to the mighty questions of political and religious freedom, and ask, “*What is the mission of this our age? What has God given it in charge to do?*” Is it not plainly this—

to enfranchise the world from all forms of oppression and error?" If this be admitted, then turn your eyes to the United States. Look at the striking providences attending its origin and progress; its rise, in a century or two, to the first rank among Christian powers; its unexampled political freedom; the ubiquity of its commerce, wonderful a century ago, now attributable to magic, were not the finger of God evidently in it; the universality of its education; the unwearied energy of its people; and the abounding comforts of its domestic life!—and say, in view of all this, if God has not undeniably raised up such a nation, in such an age, for some grand purpose? and say further, if that purpose be not also that of the age, the complete enfranchisement of the world from all forms of oppression and error?

That this is the purpose of God with respect to our country, history is beginning to show. The principles of our revolution early set fire to France; all Europe is now ablaze from the same spark. So, under our leadership, pagan and Mahomedan idolatry are soon to be dissipated by the light of a pure Christianity. The work is already begun; we believe it will be surely and speedily accomplished. If these things be so, is it not imperative upon you, American merchants, as among the foremost men in influence of our nation, to make yourselves servants of God's providence in this matter; to recognize and welcome the grand mission of your age and nation, and by your earnest labors and prayers to strive to hasten its accomplishment?

The work will undoubtedly go for-

ward though you should stand aloof, or even oppose it, for it is God's work; and "if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." But if you be faithful servants, you may aid greatly in gaining for your Master's cause a speedy triumph, and then as is the work, so will be your gracious reward, exceedingly great and glorious. Lord Bacon tells us, in his "Nova Atlantis," of an island city, Bensalem, that every year sent out twelve men, in disguise, into foreign lands, to collect and bring back what he quaintly calls "the books, and obstructs, and patterns of experiments of all other parts." These men they styled "merchants of light." So, if you be obedient to the divine voice, that seems to be urging missionary effort as your special duty, you will become

“merchants of light” also, and in a more glorious sense than those apostles of the fabled Bensalem; you will become exporters, to a world lying “in darkness and the shadow of death,” not of the dim light shed from books of worldly wisdom, but of the diviner light of the Gospel, which shines on none but to bless and save.







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